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ST. GEORGE'S DAY

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

HENRY NEWBOLT

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1918

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THE WAR FILMS

O LIVING pictures of the dead,
O songs without a sound,
O fellowship whose phantom tread
Hallows a phantom ground—
How in a gleam have these revealed
The faith we had not found.

We have sought God in a cloudy Heaven,
We have passed by God on earth :
His seven sins and his sorrows seven,
His wayworn mood and mirth,
Like a ragged cloak have hid from us
The secret of his birth.

Brother of men, when now I see
The lads go forth in line,
Thou knowest my heart is hungry in me
As for thy bread and wine :
Thou knowest my heart is bowed in me
To take their death for mine.

ST. GEORGE'S DAY

YPRES, 1915

To fill the gap, to bear the brunt
With bayonet and with spade,
Four hundred to a four-mile front
Unbacked and undismayed—
What men are these, of what great race,
From what old shire or town,
That run with such goodwill to face
Death on a Flemish down ?

*Let be ! they bind a broken line :
As men die, so die they.
Land of the free ! their life was thine,
It is St. George's Day.*

Yet say whose 'ardour bids them stand
At bay by yonder bank,
Where a boy's voice and a boy's hand
Close up the quivering rank,

Who under those all-shattering skies
Plays out his captain's part
With the last darkness in his eyes
And *Domum* in his heart ?

*Let be, let be ! in yonder line
All names are burned away.
Land of his love ! the fame be thine,
It is St. George's Day.*

HIC JACET

QUI IN HOC SAECULO FIDELITER MILITAVIT

HE that has left hereunder
The signs of his release
Feared not the battle's thunder
Nor hoped that wars should cease ;
No hatred set asunder
His warfare from his peace.

Nor feared he in his sleeping
To dream his work undone,
To hear the heathen sweeping
Over the lands he won ;
For he has left in keeping
His sword unto his son.

SACRAMENTUM SUPREMUM

YE that with me have fought and failed
and fought

To the last desperate trench of battle's
crest,

Not yet to sleep, not yet ; our work is
naught ;

On that last trench the fate of all may
-rest.

Draw near, my friends ; and let your
thoughts be high ;

Great hearts are glad when it is time to
give ;

Life is no life to him that dares not die,

And death no death to him that dares
to live.

Draw near together ; none be last or first ;

We are no longer names, but one desire ;

With the same burning of the soul we
thirst,

12 SACRAMENTUM SUPREMUM

And the same wine to-night shall
quench our fire.

Drink ! to our fathers who begot us men,
To the dead voices that are never
dumb,

Then to the land of all our loves, and then
To the long parting, and the age to
come.

1905.

FAREWELL

MOTHER, with unbowed head
Hear thou across the sea
The farewell of the dead,
The dead who died for thee.
Greet them again with tender words and
grave,
For, saving thee, themselves they could
not save.

To keep the house unharmed
Their fathers built so fair,
Deeming endurance armed
Better than brute despair,
They found the secret of the word that
saith
"Service is sweet, for all true life is
death."

So greet thou well thy dead
Across the homeless sea,
And be thou comforted
Because they died for thee.
Far off they served, but now their deed is
done
For evermore their life and thine are one.

1910.

THE SONG OF THE GUNS AT SEA

O HEAR ! O hear !
Across the sullen tide,
Across the echoing dome horizon-wide,
What pulse of fear
Beats with tremendous boom ?
What call of instant doom
What thunderstroke of terror and of
pride
With urgency that may not be denied
Reverberates upon the heart's own drum ?
Come ! . . . Come ! . . . for thou must
come !

Come forth, O Soul,
This is thy day of power.
This is the day and this the glorious hour
That was the goal
Of thy self-conquering strife.
The love of child and wife,

16 SONG OF THE GUNS AT SEA

The fields of earth and the wide ways of
thought—

Did not thy purpose count them all as
naught

That in this moment thou thyself mayst
give

And in thy country's life for ever live ?

Therefore rejoice

That in thy passionate prime

Youth's nobler hope disdained the spoils
of Time

And thine own choice

Fore-earned for thee this day.

Rejoice ! rejoice to obey

In the great hour of life that men call
Death

The beat that bids thee draw heroic
breath,

Deep-throbbing till thy mortal heart be
dumb

Come ! . . . Come ! . . . the time is
come !

1909.

THE SERVICE

THE British Navy—all our years have
been

Strong in the pride of it, secure, serene.
But who, remembering wars of long ago,
Knew what to our Sea-walls we yet
should owe ?

Who thought to see the hand of shameless
shame

With scraps of paper set the world
afame,

Barbarian hordes upon a neighbouring
coast

Rape, massacre, enslave, blaspheme and
boast,

And savage monsters, lurking under sea,
Murder the wives and children of the
free ?

If in this battle with a power accurst
We have risked all and yet escaped the
worst,

Thanks be to those who gave us ships and
guns

When generous folly still would trust in
Huns ;

Thanks be to those who trained upon the
deep

The valour and the skill that never sleep ;
Thanks above all to those who fight our
fight

For Britain's honour and for all men's
right.

And now away ! away ! put off with me
From this dear island to the open sea :
Enter those floating ramparts on the foam
Where exiled seamen guard their long-
lost home :

Enter and ask—except of child or wife—
Ask the whole secret of their ordered life.

Their wisdom has three words, unwrit,
untold,
But handed down from heart to heart of
old :

The first is this : while ships are ships
the aim

Of every man aboard is still the same.

On land there's something men self-
interest call,

Here each must save himself by saving
all.

Your danger's mine : who thinks to stand
aside

When the ship's buffeted by wind and
tide ?

If she goes down, we know that we go
too—

Not just the watch on deck, but all the
crew.

Mark now what follows—no half-willing
work

From minds divided or from hands that
shirk,

But that one perfect freedom, that content
Which comes of force for something
greater spent,

And welds us all, from conning tower to
keel,

In one great fellowship of tempered steel.

The third is like to these:—there is no
peace

In the sea-life, our warfare does not
cease.

The great emergency in which we strain
With all our force, our passion and our
pain,

Is no mere transient fight with hostile
kings,

But mortal war against immortal things—
Danger and Death themselves, whose end
shall be

When there is no more wind and no more
sea.

What of this sea-born wisdom? Is it not
Truth that on land we have too long
forgot?

While this great ship the Common-
wealth's afloat

Are we not seamen all, and in one boat?

Have we not all one freedom, lost and
found

When to one service body and soul are
bound?

And is not life itself, if seen aright,
A great emergency, an endless fight
For all men's native land, and worth the
price
Of all men's service and their sacrifice?

Ah ! had we that sea-wisdom, could we
steer
By those same stars for even half the
year,
How plain would seem, as viewed from
armoured decks,
The problems that our longshore hearts
perplex !
Less than his uttermost then none would
give,
More than his just reward would none
receive,
No ! nor desire it, for to feast or hoard
While the next table shows a hungry
board,
Whatever modern landmade laws may
say
Is not the custom of Trafalgar's Bay.

The Brotherhood, the Service, Life at
War,

These are the bonds that hold where
heroes are,

These only make the men who weary not,
The men who fall rejoicing, self-forgot.

Come back to that unfading afternoon
Where Jutland echoes to the First of June
And Beatty raging with a lion's might
Roars out his heart to keep the foe from
flight.

The Grand Fleet comes at last ; the day
is ours ;

Mile beyond mile the line majestic towers :
The battle bends : Hood takes the fore-
most place

With the grand manner of his famous race,
Beats off the giant Hindenburg, and then
Goes down, pursuing still, with all his
men.

Not all !—out yonder where the sun shall
set

Four last Invincibles are floating yet,

Abandoned, doomed, but cheering to the
last

As dreadnought after dreadnought thun-
ders past :

Cheering for joy to see, though they must
die,

The van of Life-victorious sweeping by.

My friends, I do not ask for men like these
A little dole, a little time of ease.

For them and all who love them, all
who mourn,

And all that to their faith shall yet be
born,

I ask you this—take them for what they
are,

Your Comrades in the Service, Life at
War.

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

WHEN moonlight flecks the cruiser's
decks

And engines rumble slow,
When Drake's own star is bright above
And Time has gone below,
They may hear who list the far-off sound
Of a long-dead never-dead mirth,
In the mid watch still they may hear
who will

The Song of the Larboard Berth.

*In a dandy frigate or a well-found brig,
In a sloop or a seventy-four,
In a great First-rate with an Admiral's flag
And a hundred guns or more,
In a fair light air, in a dead foul wind,
At midnight or midday,
Till the good ship sink her mids shall drink
To the King and the King's Highway !*

THE KING'S HIGHWAY 25

The mids they hear—no fear, no fear !

They know their own ship's ghost :

Their young blood beats to the same old
song

And roars to the same old toast.

So long as the sea-wind blows unbound

And the sea-wave breaks in spray,

For the Island's sons the word still runs—

“ The King, and the King's High-
way ! ”

A CHANTY OF THE *EMDEN*

THE captain of the *Emden*

He spread his wireless net,
And told the honest British tramp
Where raiders might be met :
Where raiders might be met, my lads,
And where the coast was clear,
And there he sat like a crafty cat
And sang while they drew near—
“ Now you come along with me, sirs,
You come along with me !
You’ve had your run, old England’s
done,
And it’s time you were home from
sea ! ”

The seamen of old England

They doubted his intent,
And when he hailed, “ Abandon ship ! ”
They asked him what he meant :

A CHANTY OF THE *EMDEN* 27

They asked him what he meant, my lads,
The pirate and his crew,
But he said, " Stand by ! your ship
must die,
And it's luck you don't die too !
So you come along with me, sirs,
You come along with me :
We find our fun now yours is done,
And it's time you were home from
sea ! "

He took her, tramp or trader,
He sank her like a rock,
He stole her coal and sent her down
To Davy's deep-sea dock :
To Davy's deep-sea dock, my lads,
The finest craft afloat,
And as she went he still would sing
From the deck of his damned old boat—
" Now you come along with me, sirs,
You come along with me :
Your good ship's done with wind
and sun,
And it's time you were home from
sea ! "

28 A CHANTY OF THE *EMDEN* ·

The captain of the *Sydney*

He got the word by chance ;

Says he, “ By all the Southern Stars,

We'll make the pirates dance :

We'll make the pirates dance, my lads,

That this mad work have made,

For no man knows how a hornpipe goes

Until the music's played.

So you come along with me, sirs,

You come along with me :

The game's not won till the rubber's
done,

And it's time to be home from
sea ! ”

The *Sydney* and the *Emden*

They went it shovel and tongs,

The *Emden* had her rights to prove,

The *Sydney* had her wrongs :

The *Sydney* had her wrongs, my lads,

And a crew of South Sea blues ;

Their hearts were hot, and as they shot

They sang like kangaroos—

“ Now you come along with me, sirs,

You come along with me :

A CHANTY OF THE *EMDEN* 29

You've had your fun, you ruddy old
Hun,
And it's time you were home from
sea ! ”

The *Sydney* she was straddled,
But the *Emden* she was strafed,
They knocked her guns and funnels out,
They fired her fore and aft :
They fired her fore and aft, my lads,
And while the beggar burned
They salved her crew to a tune they
knew,
But never had rightly learned—
“Now you come along with me, sirs,
You come along with me :
We'll find you fun till the fighting's
done
And the pirate's off the sea—
Till the pirate's off the sea, my lads,
Till the pirate's off the sea :
We'll find them fun till the fighting's
done
And the pirate's off the sea ! ”

THE TOY BAND

A SONG OF THE GREAT RETREAT

DREARY lay the long road, dreary lay the
town,

Lights out and never a glint o' moon :

Weary lay the stragglers, half a thousand
down,

Sad sighed the weary big Dragoon.

“ Oh ! if I'd a drum here to make them
take the road again,

Oh ! if I'd a fife to wheedle, Come, boys,
come !

You that mean to fight it out, wake and
take your load again,

Fall in ! Fall in ! Follow the fife and
drum !

“ Hey, but here's a toy shop, here's a
drum for me,

Penny whistles too to play the tune !

THE TOY BAND 31

Half a thousand dead men soon shall hear
and see

"We're a band!" said the weary big
Dragoon.

"Rubadub! Rubadub! Wake and take
the road again,
Wheedle-deedle-deedle-dee, Come, boys,
come!

You that mean to fight it out, wake and
take your load again,
Fall in! Fall in! Follow the fife and
drum!"

Cheerly goes the dark road, cheerly goes
the night,
Cheerly goes the blood to keep the
beat:

Half a thousand dead men marching on
to fight
With a little penny drum to lift their
feet.

Rubadub! Rubadub! Wake and take
the road again,
Wheedle - deedle - deedle - dee, Come,
boys, come!

You that mean to fight it out, wake and
take your load again,
Fall in ! Fall in ! Follow the fife and
drum !

As long as there's an Englishman to ask
a tale of me,
As long as I can tell the tale aright,
We'll not forget the penny whistle's
wheedle-deedle-dee
And the big Dragoon a-beating down
the night,
Rubadub ! Rubadub ! Wake and take
the road again,
Wheedle-deedle-deedle-dee, Come, boys,
come !
You that mean to fight it out, wake and
take your load again,
Fall in ! Fall in ! Follow the fife and
drum !

A LETTER FROM THE FRONT

I WAS out early to-day, spying about
From the top of a haystack—such a
lovely morning—

And when I mounted again to canter
back

I saw across a field in the broad sunlight
A young gunner subaltern, stalking along
With a rook-rifle held at the ready and—
would you believe it?—

A domestic cat, soberly marching behind
him.

So I laughed, and felt quite well-disposed
to the youngster,

And shouted out “ The top of the morn-
ing ” to him,

And wished him “ Good sport ! ”—and
then I remembered

My rank, and his, and what I ought to
be doing ;

And I rode nearer, and added, “ I can
only suppose

34 A LETTER FROM THE FRONT

You have not seen the Commander-in-
Chief's orders
Forbidding English officers to annoy
their Allies
By hunting and shooting."

But he stood and saluted
And said earnestly, " I beg your pardon,
sir,
I was only going out to shoot a sparrow
To feed my cat with."

So there was the whole picture—
The lovely early morning, the occasional
shell
Screeching and scattering past us, the
empty landscape—
Empty, except for the young gunner
saluting
And the cat, anxiously watching his
every movement.

I may be wrong, and I may have told it
badly,
But it struck *me* as being extremely
ludicrous.

THE FOURTH OF AUGUST

A MASQUE

[The Scene discloses a garden at dawn, with Sun-fays, Shadow-elves, and Spirits of the Flowers sleeping under a twilight sky and pale stars. The east lightens and the stars fade.

Enter Aurora with her train : she goes about the garden and wakes the Fays, Elves, and Spirits, who dance and sing.]

SONG OF THE SHADOW-ELVES

ALL about the garden,
All about the garden,
All about the garden
The silent shadows creep.

In and out the roses,
In and out the roses,
In and out the roses
The morning shadows creep.

Close around the dial,
Close around the dial,
Close around the dial
The noonday shadows creep.

36 THE FOURTH OF AUGUST

Far across to fayland,
Far across to fayland,
Far across to fayland
The sunset shadows creep.

All in one great shadow,
All in one great shadow,
All in one great shadow
The midnight shadows sleep.

[As they sing Aurora passes on and disappears.]

[Enter a Mortal Youth, delicately dressed :
he stretches himself on a green bank
languidly, and muses.]

How I love life ! how fair and full it
glides

In this dear land, where age-long peace
abides !

This land of Nature's finest fashioning,
Where every month brings forth some
lovely thing :

Where Spring goes like her streams, from
March to June,

Dancing and glittering to the breeze's
tune ;

THE FOURTH OF AUGUST 37

And Summer, like the rose in sunset
skies,

From splendour into splendour softly
dies ;

Where Autumn, while she sings her
harvest home,

Deep in her bosom hides the birth to
come,

And Winter dreams, when the long nights
are cold,

A dream of snowdrops and the bleating
fold.

Ah ! how I love it !—most of all the year

This perfect month when Summer's end
is near.

For now July has set, and August dawns,

A stillness broods upon the yellowing
lawns,

Now senses all are by enchantment laid

In golden sleep beneath a green-gold
shade,

Until the hour when twilight's tender
gloom

Is starred with flowers of magic faint
perfume.

38 THE FOURTH OF AUGUST

Now passions are forgot, now memory
wakes
And out of old delight new vision makes,
While Time moves only where the rose-
leaves fall,
And Death's a shade that never moves
at all.

[He muses on in silence.]

SONG OF THE FLOWER-SPIRITS

Winter's over and Summer's here:

Dance over the fairy ring !

Winter's over and Summer's here,

And the gay birds sing !

Roses flourish and roses fall:

Dance over the fairy ring !

Lilies are white and lupins tall,

And the gay birds sing !

What shall we do when Summer's dead ?

Wind over the fairy ring !

Then you must sleep in Winter's bed,

And no birds sing !

THE FOURTH OF AUGUST 39

What shall we do when Winter's done ?

Wind over the fairy ring ?

Then you must wake and greet the sun,

And the gay birds sing !

Winter's over and Summer's here :

Dance over the fairy ring !

Now comes in the sweet o' the year,

And the gay birds sing !

[Enter a Veiled Figure, who stands over
against the drowsing Youth and speaks.]

Seek not to lift my veil, ask not my name.
I have no name—I am the spirit's breath,
The soul's own blood, the secret spring of
life.

O Child of Earth and Sky, lighten thine
eyes,

See what thou art in truth—no fading
flower,

No beast of prey, no dust enjoying dust,
No fluttering thing for mere salvation
wild,

No passing shadow on the dial of Time—

40 THE FOURTH OF AUGUST

What, then? Look in thy heart; what
life hast thou

That dust and shadows lack, what life
beyond

The life of flower or beast? Have these
the power

To live for something greater, to resign
Even in the sunlit moment of their
strength

Their separate being?

I am that which bids thee
Die and outlive thyself: I am the
Voice

That all thy heroes heard. When their
long toil

Bowed down their burning shoulders,
when they built

Thy peace with their despair, when bitter
seas

Rolled over them, when battle broke their
hearts

This was their life in death—then, then
they heard

My voice, their voice, the voice within
them, saying

THE FOURTH OF AUGUST 41

“ All's lost, all's won ; the gift is perfected ! ”

[The Veiled Figure remains standing at the back of the scene.]

[The faint booming of a gun is heard : the Youth stirs and speaks again to himself.]

How still the air is—faint and far away
I hear the booming of the guns at play—
Far, far away, and faint as though it
came

From that old world of battle smoke and
flame

To stir again in hearts no longer hot
An ember-glow of passions long forgot.

[The booming is heard again, louder.]

The sound comes nearer—almost it would
seem

Insistent to be mingled with my dream.
What then ?—War cannot touch my
garden, set

Between four seas that never failed me
yet !

42 THE FOURTH OF AUGUST

And though that madness all the rest
should take—

Or for revenge's or dominion's sake—

I have sown peace and what men sow
they reap ;

I have no foe to wrong my golden sleep.

[He sinks back and sleeps again.]

SONG OF THE SUN-FAYS.]

Here in your garden green and fair
Soft you may sleep and know not care :
Sleep in your Paradise under the sky
And we will sing your lullaby.

Sunlit above you leaves are cool,
Sunlit beside you gleams the pool,
Sunlit and slumbrous Summer goes by
And we will sing your lullaby.

[They sink down upon the grass : the stillness of the garden becomes one with the Youth's dream.

Enter, as in a vision of that dream, a Mother and her two Boys : the Boys see the Fays and run towards them, but are stayed by a sudden throb of guns.

THE FOURTH OF AUGUST 43

Enter from behind the Veiled Figure a Boy with a Drum : he marches up to the two Mortal Children, touches them on the breast and signs to them to follow him. The Mother darts forward and lays her arms around them, speaking to the Boy with the Drum, in great alarm.]

MOTHER. Why do you call them ?

BOY. They must come with me.

MOTHER. Is it for life or death ?

BOY. I cannot tell :

I never heard of Death.

MOTHER. Who bade you call them ?

BOY. A woman with a veil—she stands there waiting.

MOTHER. I see her now—her veil is close as night,

But her face shines beneath it, like the fire
Of the first star that mounts his guard in
heaven.

I see her lifted hand, I hear her voice
Like thunder rolling among distant hills,
Instant, tremendous, irresistible,
Soul-shaking, world-destroying—
O my children !—

44 THE FOURTH OF AUGUST

The end of our sweet life—the end is
come !

[She bows her head over the Children, clasping them tightly. A funeral march is heard : the Boy beats his drum to it and turns to go : the mother listens in agony, still holding back her children. The funeral march changes to a high triumphant movement : she rises, and after a moment opens her arms. The Children kiss her and march joyfully away : she lifts her head with the same proud gesture as theirs, and follows them slowly and at a distance.]

MOTHER. Farewell, my sons ! The world
is changed for me :

But this too you have done—your joy
has fanned

My smouldering altar-fires, your pride
has burned

To flame and fragrance all my balm of
earth—

Child memories, high-built hopes, comfort
of love,

Yea ! even the touch, the sight and hear-
ing of you—

All's lost, all's won : the gift is perfected !

[She goes out.]

[The Youth starts up and speaks.]

THE FOURTH OF AUGUST 45

How long have I been sleeping? Now
this place

Is changed, as though after a hundred
years

That which lay bound by some ignoble
spell

Had heard a silver trumpet, leapt afoot,
And marched with tramp of thousands
to the fight.

Surely I heard that call—surely it came
Ringing with countless echoes of old
wars :

With tender pity, red indignant wrath,
White cold resolve and hatred of the
beast,

Courage that knows not fear, courage
that knows

And knowing dares a hundred deaths in
one,

Freedom that lives by service, kindli-
ness

That even in anger keeps men's brother-
hood,

And love of country, that high passionate
pride

46 THE FOURTH OF AUGUST

In the old visions of a generous race,
Not yet fulfilled, but never yet for-
saken—

Ay! these I heard, and all my blood
remembers

That so my fathers heard them.

Oh! I had seen
My garden with dull eyes; that which
was mine—

The best of my inheritance—the sight
Of those immortal ghosts whose living
glory

For ever haunts the home of their
renown—

I had lost it till this moment!

Now I wake:
I know what I have loved, I see again
Beneath the beauty of life perishing
That which transfigures, that which
makes the world
Of life enduring.

If there must be death
Let it be mine! If there must be defeat
Let it be mine, my Country, and not
thine!

THE FOURTH OF AUGUST 47

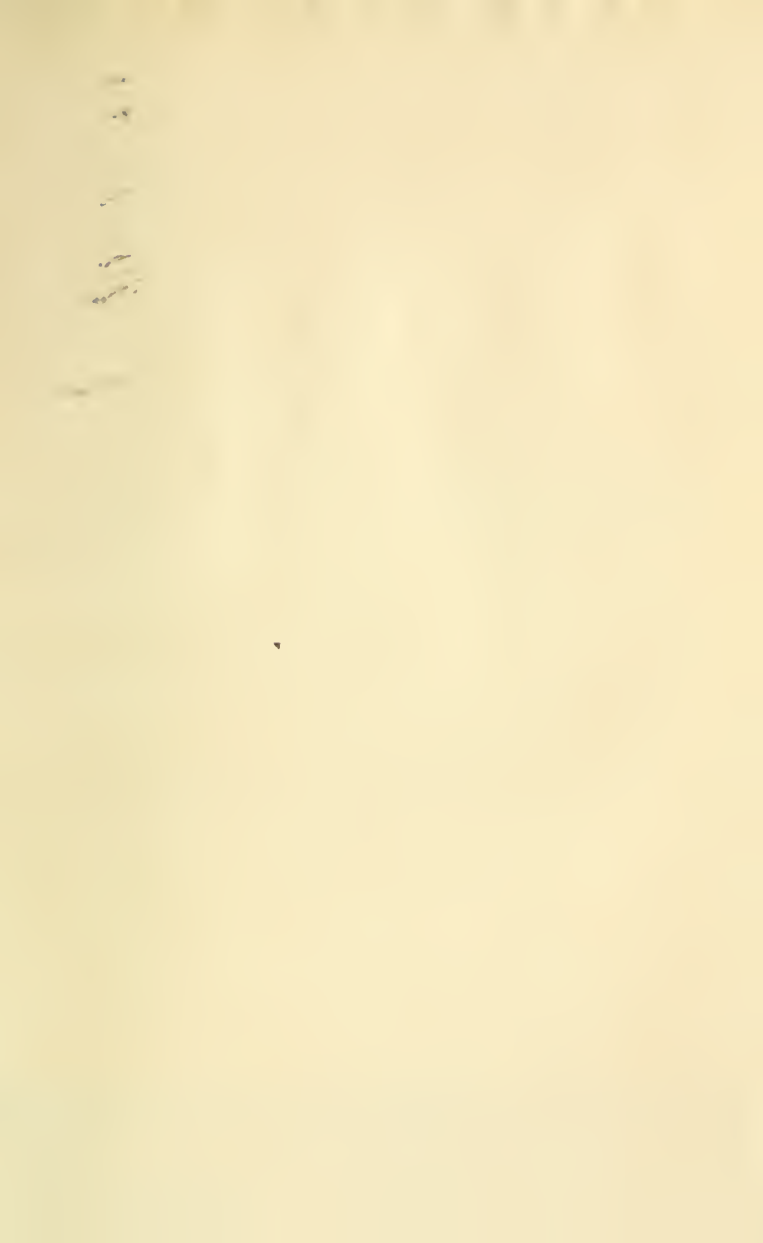
Let it be mine ! I hear a voice within
me—

All's lost, all's won !—the gift is perfected !

[He marches away proudly, to the same music.]

[The Fays dance again silently : the sun sets,
and they sink to sleep. The Veiled
Figure moves forward again, and stands
motionless where the Youth had lain
dreaming. The Curtain falls.]

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